

# STARS AND STRIPES®

## AAFES spas rub worries away

Scene magazine inside



## Kaiserslautern ceremony recalls infant deaths

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## Heidelberg, Hohenfels claim boys soccer titles

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Hohenfels' Anthony Marshall

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# Out of the force, into the work force

Program helps GIs turn Army skills to civilian employment Pages 3, 5



The Washington Post

## For women, it's risk regardless of role

Pages 12

Spc. Shavodsha Hodges, 29, of San Antonio, is receiving an award for valor for her actions that saved a wounded soldier's life during an October ambush. Soldiers across Iraq have voiced frustration over restrictions on women in combat, saying they make no sense in a war where "there is no rear area," as one female soldier put it. However, a House subcommittee, seeking to keep women out of combat, passed a measure last week that would bar women from Army support positions now open to them.

# Program helps GIs market Army training

## Military skills a springboard to starting civilian careers

*Editor's note: Sooner or later, everyone gets out of the U.S. military. For servicemembers moving on to second careers, succeeding in the civilian job market takes planning, preparation and determination. This is first in an occasional series that looks at why people are leaving the military, their goals and ambitions, and the challenges and opportunities they are facing.*



**BOOTS  
TO  
SUITS**

BY TERRY BOYD

Stars and Stripes

Leaving the security and structure of the Army is tough for many soldiers, even the ones who can't wait to shuck their BDUs for Levi's.

Separating is that much tougher for Europe-based soldiers who are trying to start a new life \$5,000 more or so from prospective employers. But the Army puts some incredible resources at the disposal of those leaving — if they'll only allow the government to show its gratitude.

"How do you thank a soldier?" is not a rhetorical question for Meg O'Grady.

The best way to thank soldiers and officers for their service is by helping them find jobs when they separate, retire or even get chaptered out, said O'Grady, a counselor with the Army Career and Alumni Pro-

gram in Baumholder, Germany.

Of course, the Army hasn't always been known for its altruism. Congress mandated that the Army create ACAP in 1991 after the government found itself paying millions in unemployment benefits to the huge number of people exiting the post-Desert Storm military, O'Grady said.

Since then, everyone leaving the Army has had to go through ACAP, "even Gen. [Colin] Powell," she said.

Unlike Powell, a confidant of presidents, most soldiers arrive at ACAP not knowing how to maximize their marketability by properly presenting Army skills to civilian employers, say O'Grady and other ACAP staffers.

If soldiers see ACAP as just another box to check while clearing, they may be missing a great opportunity, said soldiers who have taken advantage of myriad ACAP programs.

Keri Maloney spent two



Many people leaving the service are skeptical of how ACAP can help, says Meg O'Grady. But after a brief résumé-assessing session, those soldiers and officers become clients, she says.



PHOTOS BY TERRY BOYD/Stars and Stripes

Too many soldiers don't even realize that their military skills, though they may not translate precisely to civilian job requirements, showcase dependability and responsibility, Army Career and Alumni Program counselors say. Cathy Douglas gives SPC. Justin Muhs some one-on-one attention as he tweaks his résumé in hopes of finding a career in electronics.

months working with Baumholder ACAP manager Sharon Harrington, former counselor Tracy Mattison and O'Grady, refining her résumé and cover letter.

That personal attention helped her shape an application that earned an interview for a staff position with Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Ind., chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, wrote Maloney, a former captain and intelligence officer with the 1st Armored Division's 2nd Brigade, in an e-mail.

"They bent over backward for me," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 John Coufal, who is retiring at 39.

Baumholder counselors made him realize he wasn't merely an M-1 tank mechanic, military occu-

pational specialty 915 Echo, or support/staff maintenance technician with the 1st AD's 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment. By virtue of working on tanks, he's

helped me turn that into civilian verbiage."

ACAP offers everything from in-depth seminars to computers for job searches — even phones to call companies. Plus the atmosphere is more like your favorite Internet cafe "and the candy jar is always full," O'Grady said.

That's a good thing, because soldiers may spend a lot more time at ACAP than they anticipated.

Looking back, Coufal said he started with unrealistic expectations: "I thought I'd walk in here and find a job just like that."

That rarely happens.

SEE ACAP ON PAGE 5

**"If people are even thinking of transitioning, they need to come in and get familiar [with programs] so they get the most out of ACAP."**

Meg O'Grady  
ACAP counselor

also a turbine-engine repair expert — and of interest to a much broader array of companies, Coufal said.

"That civilian [human resources] personnel [has never heard Army verbiage]," he said. "They

## Making the most of ACAP

Some tips on making the most of the Army Career and Alumni Program:

■ **Take advantage:** Don't underestimate what ACAP can do for you, alumni say.

"This is probably the best program I've ever seen in the Army," said SPC. Michael Aubee, a missile technician with the 47th Forward Support Battalion, 1st Armored Division, at Baumholder. ACAP not only furnishes the hardware — phones, copiers, fax machines and computer access — for a job search, but also provides contacts and career counseling, Aubee said.

■ **VA:** The toughest thing is negotiating Veterans Affairs benefits, said Chief Warrant Officer 3 John Coufal of the 1st AD. "That process is a tough nut to crack," he said.

Specific benefits vary state by state. For example, some states give veterans free car registration, said Meg O'Grady, at the

Baumholder office. And though the federal Montgomery GI Bill is the same across the nation, additional tuition-assistance programs vary from state to state. Texas, Illinois and California all have programs supplementing the GI bill with tuition sold to residency requirements, O'Grady said.

■ **Start early:** ACAP counselors' goal now is to get people to come in early, at least a year out, "not when they've decided to ETS and they only have 90 days," O'Grady said. "If people are even thinking of transitioning, they need to come in and

get familiar [with programs] so they get the most out of ACAP."

And if a soldier's chain of command is balking about giving the person time off, ACAP counselors are willing to contact commanders, she said. "Our goal is to take care of soldier without impacting on their mission."

■ **Know thyself:** "The whole transition process requires a lot of soul searching," said Keri Maloney, a former captain with the 1st AD's 2nd Brigade. "Who am I? What experience do I have? What skills have I developed? What do I want to do in

the future? What do I have to offer a future employer?" My best advice is to start as early as possible.

"I can't sell myself until I understand the answers to these questions."

■ **Network:** Maloney believes most positions are filled from the inside. She made contacts on Capitol Hill through people in her brigade. Her chain of command was supportive of her decision to leave, and when she let it be known she wanted to work in Washington, D.C., "people would tell me they have a classmate, a friend, a cousin who works there," she said. So Maloney received many e-mail introductions to people who work on the Hill.

Just being at ACAP is a great way to network, explore different ideas "and just bounce ideas off each other," said SPC. Justin Muhs with the 1st AD's 40th Engineers Combat Brigade.

SPC. Michael Aubee  
47th Forward Support Battalion, 1st Armored Division

— Terry Boyd

**"This is probably the best program I've ever seen in the Army."**

# ACAP: Soldiers' skills appeal to civilian employers

ACAP, FROM PAGE 3

Reaching out to stateside companies while still in Europe means having to work that much harder. Prospective employers want to interview job candidates in person, Coufal said.

With his wife, Sgt. 1st Class Molly Coufal, on the verge of PCSing to Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, Coufal is having to send out résumés without a phone number, only his e-mail address. Even with that handicap, the mustachioed extrovert has mid-September interviews lined up with two companies.

Success at ACAP hinges on attitude, Coufal said. He believes he has a bright future doing basically what he did in the Army, but he'll be working for the maintenance contractors on which the military has become more and more dependent.

Ultimately, the most important transition element is capitalizing on each soldier's experience, and the ACAP staff encourages soldiers to reassess what they've done in the Army.

The squad leader doesn't just lead patrols, Coufal said, "he's mentored soldiers. He was an inventory manager. It's crazy how they know to draw all that out of you. They take that squad leader and make him look fantastic."

"They're all former military or married to officers or [noncommissioned officers]. They know everything."



TERRY BOYD/Stars and Stripes

Because he planned and saved for retirement, then did all the legwork through the Army Career and Alumni Program, Chief Warrant Officer 3 John Coufal will have his pick of job offers, said Baumholder counselors. Coufal checked out G.I. Jobs magazine at the center Thursday.

At the Baumholder ACAP, O'Grady is married to Maj. John O'Grady, an artillery officer with the Baumholder-based 4th Battalion, 27th Artillery Regiment. Harrington is a former Air Force lieutenant. Thomas "Tank" Meehan is a retired Marine Corps colonel. Cathy Douglas has a doctorate in leadership in higher education from the University of Southern California.

The staff has a combined 76 years in career counseling experi-

ence, O'Grady said.

That comes in handy because staffers see people with some interesting ambitions, including becoming rock stars, rappers and moviemakers. "The only stupid ideas are the ones you don't express," Meehan said.

Many soldiers simply don't realize how much they have going for them, O'Grady said. She said former military types look fantastic to employers: They have terrific work ethic; they often have se-

## How to use ACAP

The details on ACAP:

■ Army Career and Alumni Program offices are open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Walk-ins get a 9 a.m. briefing on ACAP and all it can do.

■ Soldiers leaving or retiring must attend a mandatory pre-separation counseling session, typically held at 9 a.m. Counselors recommend that soldiers attend a year prior to their departure date. Army regulations require that all service members be counseled no later than 90 days prior to their expiration of time of service, or ETS date.

■ Soldiers can use the ACAP program up to a year after they ETS.

■ ACAP's job-assistance workshop offers myriad services including one-on-one résumé/cover letter development, personal and group interview and corporate dress seminars, as well as assistance translating military skills to civilian descriptions.

■ ACAP offices have comput-

ers with Internet connections, phones and copy machines that may be used in the job-hunting process.

■ Even if they've been caught up in stop loss, soldiers can visit



Harrington

ACAP before they deploy. ACAP offices are open on training days, and the Baumholder counselors have had soldiers take annual leave or block leave

to make the most of the career seminars, said Sharon Harrington, the Baumholder manager.

■ Spouses are allowed to use the program with his or her spouse's Social Security number.

■ The ACAP Web site is:

[www.acap.army.mil](http://www.acap.army.mil)

curity clearances; they've proved they're dependable while shouldering huge responsibility.

Moreover, many employers are patriotic, O'Grady said, and want

to give soldiers an opportunity for purely altruistic reasons.

"They want to thank a soldier."

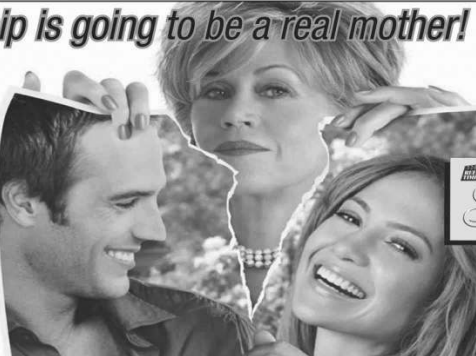
E-mail Terry Boyd at: [boydte@mail.estripes.osd.mil](mailto:boydte@mail.estripes.osd.mil)

## Coming to your FIRSTRUN Theater!

### The Relationship is going to be a real mother!

Unlucky in love, beautiful Charlotte 'Charlie' Cantilini has finally met the man of her dreams, Dr. Kevin Fields. There's just one problem his mother! Overbearing and controlling, not to mention volatile, Viola Fields has recently been canned from her job as a star news anchor. Fearing she will lose her son's affections as she has her career, Viola decides to break up the happy couple by becoming the world's worst mother-in-law. Helping her with her crazy schemes is Viola's long-time assistant, Ruby. The gloves come off when Charlie finally decides to fight back and it looks like Viola has finally met her match.

Starring Jane Fonda, Jennifer Lopez, Wanda Sykes, Michael Vartan, Adam Scott.



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